

**Libertyville, IL** – Today state and local leaders from Cook, Lake and McHenry counties joined U.S. Representatives Melissa Bean (IL-08) and Mark Kirk (IL-10) at the first meeting of their bipartisan Suburban Transportation Commission. The Commission, a pro bono advisory group, has been established by Representatives Bean and Kirk to facilitate the representation of the interests of their suburban constituencies and their efforts to ensure that these interests receive appropriate consideration as changes to Illinois's transportation funding structure are being evaluated.

Held at Lake County's Transportation Center, a state-of-the-art Libertyville facility designed to monitor transportation and traffic flow in the area, the first meeting included testimony from representatives of the area's public transportation boards, including RTA, Metra and Pace, as well as transportation experts from McHenry and Lake Counties.

Recent developments involving the future of transportation funding in Illinois, including a recent Auditor General report on the financial health of the Regional Transportation Authority as well as the release of the RTA's "Moving Beyond Congestion" plan, have underscored the importance of the panel.

"In light of the Auditor General's recent report, it is likely that Springfield will attempt some alterations of transportation funding in Illinois. That is why it is important that we work together at the federal, state, and local level to ensure that suburban priorities are considered by all transit agencies," said Bean.

One of the primary challenges for suburban collar counties is dealing with the transportation concerns that result from the area's burgeoning growth. The population of Chicago's suburbs is now twice that of the city. Suburb-to-suburb commuting is up over 50% and travel times are slowing as gridlock sets in.

To address such issues, Commission members explored suburban transportation options that will reduce traffic congestion and improve the environment, such as expanding commuter rail access and bus service routes for suburban commuters.

Among the government leaders that Representatives Bean and Kirk invited to participate in the meeting were State Senator Michael Bond, State Representative Ed Sullivan, Long Grove Village President Maria Rodriguez, Round Lake Mayor Bill Gentes and Charlie Eldredge of the McHenry County Economic Development Corporation.

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